

Module 6: Social Studies

Materials Needed

- Copies of the VELS
- Handouts
- Flip chart, markers, and tape
- Paper for drawing
- Social studies children's books
- Manipulatives found in early childhood programs
- Blocks, construction paper, grocery store props (optional)

Goals and Objectives

As a result of this module, participants will:

Related Northern Lights Core Knowledge Areas

Understand the Learning Goals and Definitions of Social Studies in the Vermont Early Learning Standards	Teaching and Learning
Be able to differentiate Social Studies from Social and Emotional Development	Child Development Teaching and Learning
Identify, recognize and support social studies action, learning and thinking	Teaching and Learning
Understand how adults use books, materials and conversation to develop children's Social Studies learning	Teaching and Learning Child Development
Understand the role of the environment, both inside, outside, and in the community, to Social Studies learning	Teaching and Learning Families and Community Health and Safety
Be able to talk to parents, colleagues and others about children's social studies learning	Family and Community Child Development
Become familiar with professional resources that support the VELS Social Studies Learning Goals and Definitions	Teaching and Learning Families and Community



Note

Page references to the Social Studies domain in the Vermont Early Learning Standards in this module are noted as: "VELS" followed by the page number. For example, VELS Pg. 20. Relevant pages for this module are 18-19, 26, and 31.

Introductions and Opening Activity

Make sure participants and the instructor introduce themselves including pertinent information about their work and work settings. Instructor can choose from among the following options for an opening activity:

Module 6: Social Studies

- *Handout 1: Reflecting on Early Social Studies Learning.*
- Group brainstorm: What did you initiate with children this week that you would call Social Studies? What did you see children doing on their own that you would call Social Studies? Chart the group's responses.
- What's in a Name? Repeat introductions, this time include a story about your name. It could be simply "I was named after my father's grandmother", or a more involved story about the origin of your name, or how your name is always misspelled by others, or what happened to your last name when your ancestors immigrated to this country. Make sure everyone has a story to share.
- *Handout 2: Coat of Arms.*
- *Handout 3: Neighborhood Maps.*

Review the Standard and Domain

Give participants some time to read the section on Social Studies in the VELs. Ask them to highlight key words and concepts related to social studies.

Help them connect the learning experiences in the opening activity to the Social Studies Learning Goals, Definitions and Examples. (This may be done as a large group, or in small groups.)

Optional interactive learning activities:

Activity: Finding the Social Studies in Children's Literature

1. Select a book from the Social Studies children's bibliography and read it aloud.
2. Have participants identify Social Studies Learning Goals and Examples from the VELs that are covered in the book.

Activity: Finding the Social Studies in Learning Centers

1. Divide participants into small groups.
2. Assign each group a different learning center or area in the classroom or home environment, e.g., blocks, sensory table, art, outdoors, reading, dramatic play.
3. On flip chart paper, have each group make a list, answering the following questions:
 - What kind of social studies learning takes place in this area?
 - What do children do in this area that you call Social Studies learning?
 - What can teachers/adults do in this area to promote Social Studies learning?
4. Post the charts around the room, and have groups walk around and look at all of the lists, adding new ideas as they go.

Background on Social Studies

Social studies is related to, but different from, social and emotional development. The purpose of social studies for young children is to help them understand and participate effectively in their world. It is the study of how individuals relate to places (geography); the past (history); other people and how they live; and their environment. It is also the study of how individuals contribute to groups such as families, neighborhoods, and communities through making and abiding by rules, understanding and accepting differences, and treating one another with respect, kindness and justice. It is important to know about social and emotional development in young children when exploring social studies learning goals in order to prepare them to be “citizens of a democratic society” (Seefeldt, C. Social studies for the preschool/primary child. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 2001

The goals of Social Studies for young children include:

- Development of a positive self-concept, and that while they are different from others, they share some of the same feelings and problems.
- Recognition and understanding of the ways that they as individuals, can contribute to society (or their family, neighborhood or community).
- Acquire the knowledge and understanding of the many cultures, beliefs and values of the individuals who make up our society and the world, and to acknowledge their unique contributions.
- Developing a sense of the past, especially as it relates to themselves as individuals, in order to understand the present and have an appreciation for their heritage.
- Developing spatial awareness of their location in the world beginning with places that are known to them, such as home, school and neighborhood.
- Understanding social, political, and economic forces in developmentally appropriate ways that enables them to see their role and responsibilities in a larger group.
- Developing an understanding and appreciation of the environment and how resources are used and conserved so that there will be enough to go around in the future.
- Understanding of democratic norms and values such as justice, equality, fairness, kindness in their own lives and the lives of their families and friends.

Social Studies Thinking Skills: Use *Handout 4: Social Studies Thinking Skills*.

Questioning and Identifying Problems

- Prior knowledge and understanding
- Supportive psychological environment
- Observant teachers

Module 6: Social Studies

Locating and Gathering Information

- Direct observation
- Field trips and classroom visitors
- Indirect observation

Organizing information

- Classifying
- Sequencing
- Graphing and charting

Interpreting information

- Reflecting
- Comparing and contrasting
- Personal meaning

Generalizing

- Making links
- Seeing relationships
- Drawing conclusions
- Continuity of experience

Child Development Theorists Support for the Social Studies

Piaget: believed children construct knowledge through maturation and interaction with their social and physical environment. Children think about things differently than adults—they are egocentric, and they need to touch and experience with their senses in order to learn about something.

Vygotsky: believed children's social and psychological worlds are connected, and that interaction with others is necessary for cognitive development. He believed that language is used to regulate and stimulate thought, and that teaching is geared to the "zone of proximal development". This means that what is taught should match what the child already knows and can accomplish independently, as well as with the help and support of others.

Piaget and Vygotsky influenced the way social studies is taught because of their understanding of children. For social studies to be valuable to young children it needs to be:

- Integrated-with children's cultural knowledge, personal background, family, community and within the total curriculum
- Meaningful-appropriate to their development and corresponding to their social, emotional, physical and cognitive maturity
- Of high interest-based in children's first-hand experiences, play, choice and social interaction

What Does Social Studies Look Like?

What does Social Studies look like and how might teachers observe it in young children?

Children's play naturally involves many of the social studies thinking skills. In play children explore their relationship to the environment, to other people and to their community. They use their imagination to transport themselves to other places and other times. By looking closely at the social studies that happen spontaneously in children's play we can learn more about how to be intentional about planning and offering learning opportunities in the domain of social studies.

Activity: Social Studies Scenarios

1. Divide participants into small groups.
2. Use *Handouts 5-11: Social Studies Scenarios*, case examples of children interacting with others and materials in an early childhood program.
3. Have participants read the scenario and answer the related questions as a way to engage them in exploring the idea that social studies thinking happens spontaneously in children's play, and the opportunities for teachers to extend their play and enhance their social studies learning.

Reflecting on Social Studies

Taking into consideration what has been covered so far in this module, and in the Learning Goals of Social Studies in the VELs, the instructor can ask participants to reflect on their teaching style and practice with the following questions:

1. Ask participants to reconsider their curriculum this week. Is there anything else you have done, or noticed the children doing, that you would identify as social studies thinking? Is there anything you would add to the curriculum, or extend to strengthen the learning opportunities for children to explore social studies even more?
2. Have participants talk in small groups about social studies in their curriculum. Have them discuss the following questions: Where do you get your ideas? What works well consistently? How have children used your ideas in ways you didn't expect them to? What are you eager to try or do more of now?
3. Have participants place themselves on a social studies teaching continuum—from novice to expert. Where would they place themselves as of right now? Where would they like to be? How might they get there?

The Adult's Role in Supporting this Domain

The instructor should direct participants to look at the list of adult actions that support social studies learning and thinking in the VELs, Pg. 19.

- In small groups, have participants expand upon that list. Ask them to make the items on the list specific. For instance, "provide ample opportunities for children to explore their surroundings by taking field trips in their neighborhood and beyond" is the first statement. Small groups should refer to the *Handout 4: Social Studies Thinking Skills*, the VELs Learning Goals and

Module 6: Social Studies

their own teaching practice to answer how, when, with whom, where and what adults do with regard to field trips and neighborhood excursions.

- Have participants add to the list other ways adults support children's social studies learning and thinking.
- See Handout 12: Question Starters

Activity: Open-ended Question Starters (Optional exercise)

1. Have participants brainstorm a list of open-ended question starters. For example, "Do you notice?", "What happens if?", "How did you do that?", or "What does that mean to you?"
2. Give participants construction paper and markers to make reminder signs with their five favorite question starters. These can be posted in their classrooms or homes to prompt them to ask open-ended questions with children.

The Role of the Environment in Supporting this Domain

Early childhood environments play a big role in setting the stage for children to learn and develop the attitudes, knowledge and dispositions of social studies.

The instructor should lead small groups in discussing the merits of the list in the VELs, Pg. 19 under the heading "*The environment can support children's understanding of social studies by...*" and adding new ideas to the list.

Next, have the large group identify some learning centers or areas of the environment they have in common. Assign each small group one area or learning center. Using a piece of flip chart paper, each group should answer

- How does this area relate to social studies?
- What materials can I bring to this area to enhance children's social studies experiences?
- What vocabulary might I use, or what activities could I plan to make this area into a social studies learning center?

Have groups post their ideas on the wall and do a walk-about to see everyone's work. They should take notes or the instructor could offer to type up their ideas and distribute them at a later date.

Reflecting on the Role of the Adult and the Environment

Give everyone a chance to record "take home ideas", or things they want to remember when they go back to their classrooms and child care homes. Have them include:

- Materials I already have that I could use to enhance social studies learning
- Ideas I got from other people
- Steps I will take next week to strengthen social studies in my curriculum

Putting it All Together

Instructor should lead discussion about how the social studies domain connects to other domains of VELs. Where do the participants see overlap?

Activity: Newspaper Article

1. Have each person create a headline that might be associated with a newspaper article on social studies for young children; for example, "Four Year Olds Map the Neighborhood" Or "Preschoolers Recycle Their Lunch Scraps".
2. Pass their headline to the person next to them and have everyone write a short article for an early childhood newsletter.

Activity: Parent Involvement with Children's Social Studies Learning

1. Ask participants how they would communicate with parents about social studies and the Vermont Early Learning Standards.
2. Have individuals, pairs or small groups select a parent involvement medium-newsletter, bulletin board, performance, parent education night, advisory or policy council meeting, or other.
3. Ask them to design an engaging activity that helps parents learn what social studies is for preschoolers and why it is an important part of the VELs and your curriculum.

Conclusion

Instructor summarizes the main points and discoveries made by participants during this module. Be sure to include:

- The goals of social studies for young children
- Social studies thinking skills
- Using questions
- Teacher-initiated and child-initiated activities that promote social studies
- Relationship between social studies and other domains of the VELs

Module 6: Social Studies

This page left intentionally blank.

Handout 1: Reflecting on Early Social Studies Learning

Materials

None

Room Arrangement

Comfortable seating arrangement

Time

10 minutes

Goal

To warm up participants to the topic of social studies by invoking memories of their social studies learning as a child.

Instructor

1. The instructor asks the group to close their eyes and try to go back to your early school experiences. Reflect on the memories they have of learning social studies. What images come to mind?
2. Jot down a few thoughts or draw a picture to express your memory.
3. Follow up with these questions:
 - How would you describe the social studies lessons you experienced?
 - As the learner, what did you do during the social studies lessons?
 - What did your teacher do during the social studies lessons?
 - What did you enjoy about these social studies lessons? What didn't you enjoy?
 - What was effective about learning social studies this way? How could these social studies experiences have been more effective?

Module 6: Social Studies

Handout 2: Coat of Arms

Materials

Coat of Arms hand-outs, markers, list of questions

Room Arrangement

Groups of 5-8 seated comfortably at tables

Time

15-20 minutes

Goal

To have participants independently work on a personal coat of arms and to think about what social studies means to each of us.

Instructor

1. Give each participant a copy of coat of arms template, on the following page.
2. Make sure there are markers on each table.
3. Tell the participants that there are going to create a coat of arms by filling each section with one of the subjects below:
 - a picture that shows family history
 - a life changing event
 - someplace you have visited or some place you would like to visit
 - a special family tradition
 - an historical event occurring in your lifetime
4. When participants have completed their coat of arms, have them share with their small group.

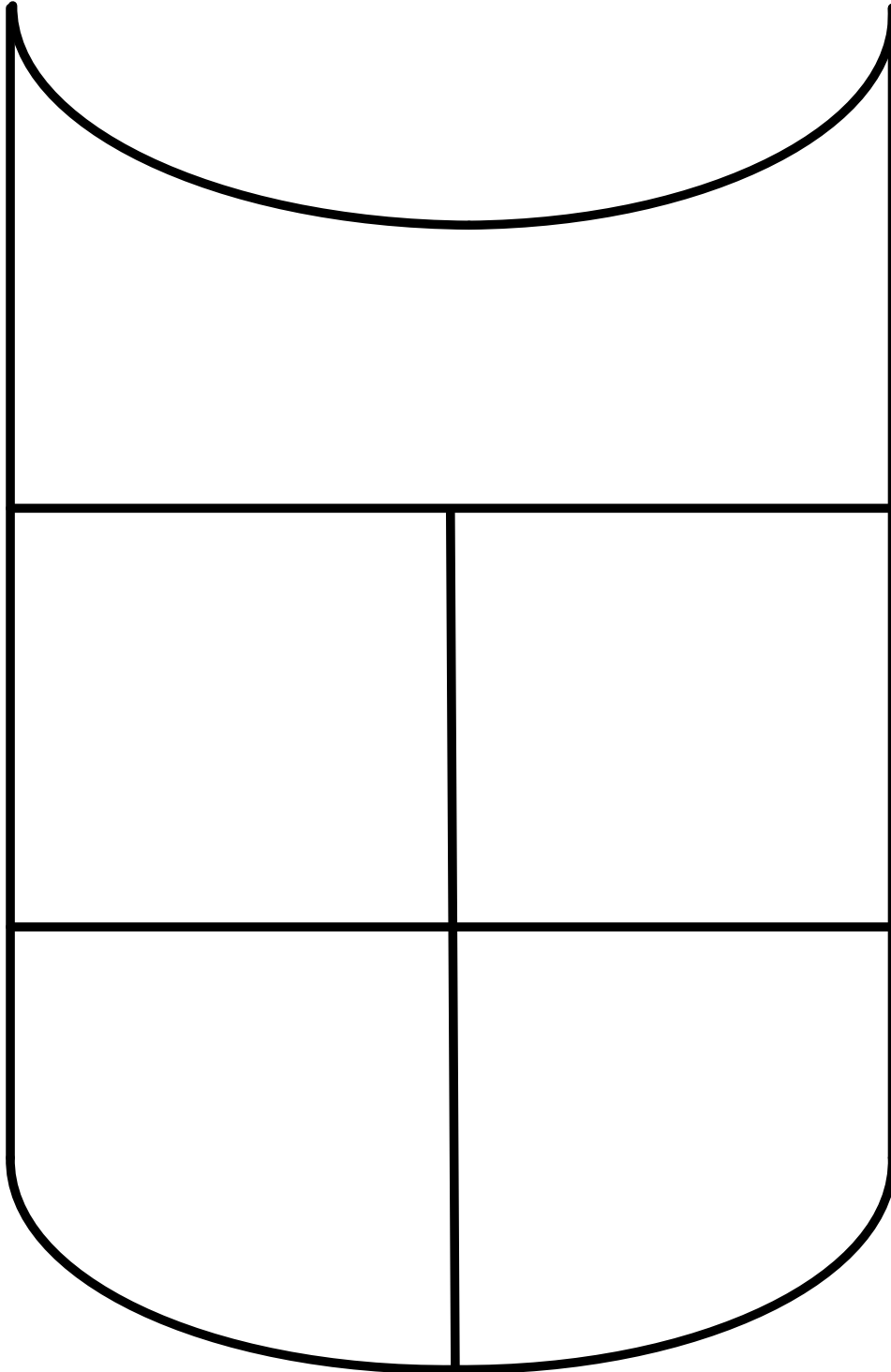


Note You may want to draw a sample coat of arms outline on chart paper with the specific item to be draw in each section, to avoid multiple questions and to make task easier for participants.

You may also want to share some of the completed coat of arms with the whole group. Noting any common themes.

Discussion: Ask participants to share what social studies means to them?

My Coat of Arms



Module 6: Social Studies

Handout 3: Neighborhood Maps

Materials

Paper and markers or crayons

Room Arrangement:

Tables

Time:

20 minutes minimum

Goal:

To help participants get to know each other by drawing maps of neighborhood walks they took as children and then describing their maps to each other.

Instructor

1. Introduce the activity by saying:

“Take a few minutes to think about a walk you took as a child. Make a simple map of this walk including all the buildings and sights you saw. When everyone at your table is finished, take turns describing your maps to each other. Concentrate on what you saw, how you felt as a child and any other details such as “My Mother told me never to go that way, but I did.”

2. Watch and circulate as people draw their maps. When it looks like most maps are complete remind participants that it's time to share their experiences.

3. When each person has had a chance to describe his/her map lead a group discussion about what was observed:

- “Did any of you draw similar maps?”
- “Did you learn anything new about your colleagues?”
- “Was it easy to draw the map?”

4. Talk about the memories the maps inspired.

Handout 4: Social Studies Thinking Skills

1. Questioning and Identifying Problems
 - Prior knowledge and understanding
 - Supportive psychological environment
 - Observant teachers
2. Locating and Gathering Information
 - Direct observation
 - Field trips and classroom visitors
 - Indirect observation
3. Organizing Information
 - Classifying
 - Sequencing
 - Graphing and charting
4. Interpreting Information
 - Reflecting
 - Comparing and contrasting
 - Personal meaning
5. Generalizing
 - Making links
 - Seeing relationships
 - Drawing conclusions
 - Requires continuity of experience

Module 6: Social Studies

Handout 5: Social Studies Scenario Instructions

Materials

Handouts 6-11

Room Arrangement

Set up comfortable for working in small groups

Time

20 minutes

Goals

- To identify the social studies action and thinking in typical scenarios of children at play.
- To identify the social studies in children's play, using the learning goals, definitions and examples as described in the VELs.

Instructor

1. Ask participants to imagine the scenario happening in their classroom or program.
2. Identify the social studies learning goals and examples involved in these scenarios.



Instructor may choose to provide groups with the materials described in the scenario (blocks, paint and paper, grocery store dramatic play props) and ask them to act it out.

In that case, have groups assign roles of children, adult, and observers. Children and adults will use the materials and language as described in the scenario, while observers will look for evidence of social studies thinking and actions.

Handout 6: Social Studies Scenario #1

Nancy has used four blocks to make a square on the floor. She has filled it in with smaller blocks in a brick-like pattern and has added several small vehicles. Beside this structure, she has built a square tower (about 18 inches tall) by criss-crossing foot-long blocks. As she places small people figures inside the tower, she says to her friend, "All these people live in here and that big parking lot is for all their cars."

What social studies component(s) and performance indicator(s) are pertinent to this observation? (Please write them out.)

What social studies learning goals are visible? (Refer to the VELs, pages 18-19.)

What social studies thinking is going on? (Refer to *Handout 4: Social Studies Thinking Skills*.)

What might you ask or say to Nancy to extend her thinking and make her aware of her own social studies learning and feel like a social studies researcher?

Module 6: Social Studies

Handout 7: Social Studies Scenario #2

Michael has connected a combination of straight and curved blocks end-to-end and calls it a road. He has placed small cars and trucks on the road and some miniature street signs along the edges. He holds a small block to his mouth, as if talking into a walkie-talkie, and in an excited voice says, "The cars are speeding. I'm going to arrest them!"

What social studies component(s) and performance indicator(s) are pertinent to this observation? (Please write them out.)

What social studies actions are visible? (Refer to the VELs, pages 18-19.)

What social studies thinking is going on? (Refer to *Handout 4: Social Studies Thinking Skills*.)

What might you ask or say to Michael to extend his thinking and make him aware of his own social studies learning and feel like a social studies researcher?

Handout 8: Social Studies Scenario #3

Rose has put small triangular blocks on top of small square blocks to create six "cabins." (her name for them) The 6 structures are placed in a circle with empty space in the middle. She has put several toy people around. As I pass by, she points to each one and tells me what it is used for: "That one's for cooking. That one's for going to the bathroom. That one's for meetings. And these are for sleeping." I ask, "What were you thinking about as you built this?" Rose replies, "Ya know that Africa book we read? This is the village and now I'm gonna make the fire pit in the middle."

What social studies component(s) and performance indicator(s) are pertinent to this observation? (Please write them out.)

What social studies actions are visible? (Refer to the VELs, pages 18-19.)

What social studies thinking is going on? (Refer to *Handout 4: Social Studies Thinking Skills*.)

What might you ask or say to Rose to extend her thinking and make her aware of her own social studies learning and feel like a social studies researcher?

Module 6: Social Studies

Handout 9: Social Studies Scenario #4

Tony and Kenneth are talking about their families. Tony: "I have just a mother."

Kenneth: "No, you gotta have a daddy! Everyone has a daddy." Tony: "Yeh, I gotta daddy, but he lives far away from here." Kenneth: "Oh. How far away does he live?"

Tony: "Real far - not where we live - a place with a different name - I don't know the name, though." Kenneth: "Well, my Grammy lives far away too."

What social studies component(s) and performance indicator(s) are pertinent to this observation? (Please write them out.)

What social studies actions are visible? (Refer to the VELs, pages 18-19.)

What social studies thinking is going on? (Refer to *Handout 4: Social Studies Thinking Skills*.)

What might you ask or say to Tony and Kenneth to extend their thinking and make them aware of their own social studies learning and feel like a social studies researchers?

Handout 10: Social Studies Scenario #5

Tyreesha is painting at the easel. After each stroke of the paint brush, she glances around the room before adding the next stroke. Along one edge of the painting, she paints small black squares. She adds several different shapes over the rest of the paper and intersperses short, straight lines among the shapes. Now she's adding some human-like figures. Patsy walks by and asks, "What's that?" Tyreesha replies, "I'm makin' a map of the classroom to tell people how to get out of there's a fire."

What social studies component(s) and performance indicator(s) are pertinent to this observation? (Please write them out.)

What social studies actions are visible? (Refer to the VELs, pages 18-19.)

What social studies thinking is going on? (Refer to *Handout 4: Social Studies Thinking Skills*.)

What might you ask or say to Tyreesha to extend her thinking and make her aware of her own social studies learning and feel like a social studies researcher?

Module 6: Social Studies

Handout 11: Social Studies Scenario #6

George is playing in the dramatic play area, which is set up as a grocery store. He's removing food items from the shelves and putting them in a basket. He stops when there's six items in the basket. He gets the clip board and a pencil and jots down several seemingly random numbers. Another child arrives and says, "Can I help you?" George says, "I don't know if I have enough money for six foods, so I'm writin' down the numbers." The other child says, "You should have a calculator!" and departs.

What social studies component(s) and performance indicator(s) are pertinent to this observation? (Please write them out.)

What social studies actions are visible? (Refer to the VELs, pages 18-19.)

What social studies thinking is going on? (Refer to *Handout 4: Social Studies Thinking Skills*.)

What might you ask or say to George to extend his thinking and make him aware of his own social studies learning and feel like a social studies researcher?

Handout 12: Question Starters

Materials

Small bags containing assorted manipulatives and small toys found in early childhood settings

Room Arrangement

Small groups at tables or on the floor

Time

10 minutes

Goals

- To simulate teachers observing and extending children's play through asking open-ended questions.
- To observe for open-ended questions.

Instructor

1. Pass out small bags of manipulatives and play items to groups of four.
2. Have participants pick roles of adult, children and observer.
3. Ask them to simulate children playing with the materials given to them, and have the adult play the role of a teacher extending the child's play.
4. Ask the "child" to use the materials in a playful manner.
5. Ask the "teachers" to try to use as many open-ended questions as possible as they try to extend the child's play.
6. Ask the "observers" to write down words used to start the open-ended questions and notice the difference in the child's response when open-ended questions were asked.



Note Instructor should set the stage for this activity by asking for everyone's "best behavior". Sometimes when doing simulations, people play the role of the world's worst child/teacher or other character. This provides some humor, but actually makes it harder for the goal of the activity to be achieved. The point here is to experience the asking of open ended questions, not to figure out creative strategies to keep your cool with a challenging child.

Module 6: Social Studies

Social Studies Professional Resources

Copple, C. ed. A world of difference: Readings on teaching young children in a diverse society. Washington, DC: NAEYC, 2003.

Dodge, D.T., L.J. Colker, & C. Heroman. Connecting content, teaching and learning. Washington, DC: Teaching Strategies, Inc., 2000.

Dodge, D.T., L.J. Colker, & C. Heroman. The creative curriculum for preschool, 4th edition. Washington, DC: Teaching Strategies, Inc., 2002.

Mother Goose Programs. Mother goose cares about social studies. Chester, VT: Vermont Center for the Book, 2004.

Seefeldt, C. Social studies for the preschool/primary child. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 2001.

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement. Early childhood: where learning begins-geography. Jessup, MD: ED Pubs, 1999.

"Young learners around the globe". Young Children 59 (5). Entire issue, 2004.

Supplemental Material

Module 6: Social Studies

This page left intentionally blank.